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ABSTRACT

The inability of higher education institutions to self-regulate "big time" college sports has focused attention on issues such as academic integrity, gender equity in sports offerings, and students' academic progress towards degrees, and has resulted in increased oversight by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) on this important source of institutional revenue. There has also been a trend towards moving athletic operations away from faculty. Using a three-round Delphi survey technique, this study surveyed 15 athletic directors and 15 faculty senate presidents at leading NCAA Division I programs, asking the following question: "Please identify the methods, means, and techniques by which faculty should be involved in the administration or governance of intercollegiate athletics." It also asked for five or more specific ways to include faculty authority through an athletic council with power to make recommendations to a president. Twenty-three of the 30 participants identified 49 techniques by which faculty could be empowered in intercollegiate athletic governance. The strategies identified were largely traditional in nature, and included reviewing student academic support services; comparing graduation rates, retention, and academic performance of student-athletes to the general student population; and cooperative review of proposed NCAA legislation regarding academic policies. (RH)

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Faculty Involvement in Intercollegiate Athletic Governance

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Colleges and universities have come to rely on intercollegiate athletics as a primary source of public relations and institutional advancement, and former Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Chancellor Don Beggs recently commented that the sports section of local and national newspapers is the only place a person can consistently read about the success of any particular college. Intercollegiate athletics have also become a major source of institutional revenue, with some institutions generating over $30 million dollars per year in income. There are difficulties, however, associated with these "big time" college sports: academic integrity, equity among genders in sport offerings, a student's academic progress toward degree, and among others, eligibility of athletes.

Recent, historical, and continued abuses by institutions concerning student-athlete integrity has forced a growing oversight by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The inability of institutions to self-regulate this "industry" has caused considerable difficulty for many college leaders, and the result has been a removal of college sport operations away from faculty. This removal from faculty purview has subsequently been a factor in the decreasing academic attention of student-athletes, making these individuals, particularly in high-profile sports, athletes first and students second.

The involvement of faculty in intercollegiate athletic regulation has a long history, dating to the very first offerings of sports by higher education institutions.

Although intercollegiate athletics programs have grown dramatically in size, fiscal responsibility, and as a potential marketing tool, faculty involvement has diminished throughout the campus governance structure. Faculty involvement in governance was provided a dramatic increase in importance during the academic freedom of the 1960's and 1970's, however Kerr (1991) has argued convincingly that faculty bodies have not assumed the power granted to them over 20 years ago.

The NCAA has recognized the importance of faculty involvement in athletic oversight, and has decreed the appointment of a faculty athletic representative (FAR) at each member institution. While not defined in NCAA regulations as a full-time faculty member, this singular individual has responsibility for conveying academic integrity in college sports from the faculty perspective. The current study was subsequently designed to identify the methods, means, and techniques by which faculty should be involved in the administration or governance of intercollegiate athletics.

Background of the Study

Faculty involvement in governance has taken on a number for forms at different institutions, ranging from representative senates to town-hall type forums where faculty meet to discuss and debate issues of importance to the institution. In general, these activities are spurred on by either a need to

challenge administrative decisions or actions, or through a desire to create a more consensual decision-making process. In the former, Bergmann (1992) refereed to the need for involvement due to "bloated administrations and blighted campuses" (p. 12), arguing a system of checks and balances, with the responsibility to hold administration in place through counter-action (Rosovsky,1990; Miller, McCormack, Maddox, & Seagren, 1996). In the later, involvement in reaching decisions through a shared process can result in a greater climate of decision acceptance and mutual respect for disagreement (Birnbaum, 1991).

The history of intercollegiate athletic governance has deviated from this dual approach to needing faculty input in self-regulation. Early attempts to self-govern intercollegiate athletic competition was coordinated through a combination of faculty and presidential oversight. This oversight was rudimentary, relying on faculty to preserve the integrity of students in their classes, while presidential control was relegated to general oversight of coaches and athletic staff. A number of scandals documented throughout the early- and mid-1900s, however, identified the lack of singular control for athletics as a major barrier to academic integrity. The growth of the NCAA prompted institutions to create a system of direct presidential oversight of intercollegiate athletics (Knight Foundation, 1991; 1992; 1993). Student affairs personnel and faculty remained actively involved at institutions choosing not to compete at the

Division I level. At the Division I level, the NCAA invoked its power to require each institution to appoint a FAR (Newman & Miller, 1993).

Methods

As a descriptive, exploratory study, the Delphi survey technique was identified as the most appropriate form of data collection. The Delphi technique allows for experts in a given area to identify, reflect, and come to consensus on a given topic. For the current study, the experts were identified as the athletic directors and faculty senate (or equivalent) presidents at leading NCAA Division I programs. These "big-time" college sports institutions were assumed to be those with the most dependence on athletics, particularly men's football and basketball, and subsequently, face the most difficulty in striking a balance between a student-athletes ability to matriculate and participate.

The first Delphi survey ("round") was mailed to 15 athletic directors and 15 faculty senate presidents. Each member of the group was asked to respond to the same question. The question read: "Please identify the methods, means, and techniques by which faculty should be involved in the administration or governance of intercollegiate athletics. In specific, list five or more methods, ways, or specific techniques you believe best complete this statement: Through an athletic council with power to make recommendations to the president, faculty authority should include..."

Responses were held in strict confidence, and the entire listing was edited for duplication before being resubmitted to participants for rating on a 1-to-5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) Likert-type scale. To help develop agreement among the participants, only those statements with a rating in the Agreement (4) to Strong Agreement (5) range were included on the third and final round of the survey.

Results

A total of 23 of the possible 30 (77% response rate) participants completed all three rounds of the Delphi survey, including 13 (87%) faculty senate presidents and 10 (67%) athletic directors. These 23 respondents identified 49 possible methods, means, or techniques by which faculty should be empowered in intercollegiate athletic governance or administration. One-fifth of these statements (10) were rated with a mean of 4.00 (Agreement) on the 1-to-5 Likert-type scale, thus resulting in ten statements being included on the third and final round of the Delphi. Between the second and third round of the Delphi survey, there were 55 recorded changes in scoring when given the opportunity to examine the group mean, for an average of 2.4 changes per participant.

The strategies with the strongest agreement were reviewing the academic support services made available for student-athletes (mean 4.70; SD .47) and comparing the graduation rate, retention, and academic performance of student-

athletes to the general population (mean 4.70; SD .56). The next highest rated strategy was the cooperative reviewing of proposed NCAA legislation regarding academic policies (mean 4.57; SD .59). The identified strategy with the least support was graduate teaching assistants/tutors must be properly trained in what constitutes advice and mentoring versus doing the student-athletes work (mean 4.26; SD .92). As shown in Table 1, there was also the least disparity of responses for the review of student-athlete support services, as evidenced by the low standard deviation.

Due to the relatively small number of participants and the intent of the investigation to be exploratory in nature, no attempt was made to compare the ratings made by athletic directors and faculty senate presidents.

Discussion

Intercollegiate athletics are at a crossroads of purpose within higher education. College sports have tremendous entertainment value, yet this value is often at a counter purpose with the concept of academic achievement. There are deviations from this argument, as any viewing of Academic All-Americans will attest to, but it is the majority of student-athletes who must cope with short-lived athletic careers and multiple pressures while in college. Faculty alone have historically proven unable to control athletic competitions and the college sports industry, and college presidents today feel the pressure of juggling mixed

messages of what they can offer the public while simultaneously serving the student-athlete. The result has been an increased responsiveness by the NCAA to regulate college athletics, and the recent attempt to accredit sports programs is the latest in a long-history of attempted academic integrity brokering.

Conceptually, the current study provides a firm rationale for importing more faculty involvement in athletic governance, yet the responses provided by athletic directors and faculty senate presidents were largely traditional in nature. The strategies identified could easily be applied to student affairs, distance education, or even fund-raising efforts. The identification of specific strategies and the high percentage of participants does, however, reflect a recognition of the problems associated with big-time college sports programs.

The first of the high-agreement strategies dealt with faculty involvement in reviewing or studying what is offered to college athletes to support their attempt at balancing sports and academics. In theory, the NCAA FAR has a role in this, but the respondents were quick to note that this may not be enough, and that broad-based, inclusive decision making in creating an environment to support student-athletes may be needed. The other strongly agreed to strategy of comparing student-athlete performance to non-athlete performance demonstrates the often hypocritical nature of higher education. Through the NCAA and other reporting channels, student-athletes grades are made public (by team, for example), the ratio of men and women receiving scholarships,

racial breakdowns by sport, graduation rates, etc. are all freely reported. Rarely, however, are student-athletes grades compared to other undergraduates in involvement-intensive student organizations. Respondents appeared to be making the argument that student-athletes need to be treated fairly, and that in-class bias may have less to do with a student's ability, and more to do with the athletic enterprise in general and special expectations for student-athletes.

The lower rating of special teaching assistance for tutors and teaching assistants illustrated that faculty senate presidents and athletic directors gave little credence to the idea of professional development. Some of this may be defensiveness on the part of faculty who believe that those teaching are not at fault, while the converse may also hold true, in that athletic administrators see teachers, tutors, and teaching assistants as being "out to get" student athletes.

Overall, the current study raises as many questions as it answers. Student-athletes must be placed in a better situation to excel in and out of the classroom for college athletics to hold their pre-eminent place on campus. This means a continued, serious dialogue about exceeding minimum NCAA imposed regulations, and getting faculty to communicate openly and freely with those in athletics about how best to serve this special population. Continued research and dialogue about this topic is strongly needed, and will offer the fundamental framework for the role of sports in higher education in the future.

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Table 1

Strategies for Involving Faculty in Athletic Governance
N=23

Strategy	Mean	SD
Through an athletic council with power to make recommendations to the president, faculty authority should include...		
Involvement in certifying eligibility, review practice and competition schedules, student-athlete surveys.	4.52	.90
Reviewing the academic support services made available for student-athletes.	4.70	.47
Developing policies regarding missed class time due to athletic competition.	4.48	.90
Reviewing proposed NCAA legislation regarding academic policies.	4.57	.59
Comparing the graduation rate, retention, and academic performance of student-athletes to the general population.	4.70	.56
Obtain representative membership on athletic board which reviews areas of athletics and advises athletic director and/or president.	4.52	.59
Good communication helps to bring about better understanding of competing interests.	4.48	.51
Have faculty oversight for the policies on eligibility of students for intercollegiate athletics.	4.52	.51
Graduate teaching assistants/tutors	4.26	.92

must be properly trained in what constitutes advice and mentoring versus doing the student-athletes work.		
Faculty should respect the student-athlete and when appropriate, work with the coach to the same level one would work with a non-athlete student with special needs.	4.43	.59